

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - August 17, 2006

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced that Jovanni Mendoza was convicted on alien smuggling, marijuana smuggling and distribution charges today, after a bench trial in San Diego before United States District Court Judge Dana M. Sabraw. Mendoza, who last year rammed a California Highway Patrol vehicle while driving the wrong way on Interstate 8 in a vehicle containing nearly 700 pounds of marijuana and at least five illegal aliens, was convicted of ten felony counts. According to documents filed in the case, during the evening of August 17, 2005, Mendoza was the driver of a white Chevrolet Suburban which was stopped by a California Highway Patrol Officer for an expired registration violation. Mendoza initially pulled over, but then fled, driving the wrong way (westbound) in the eastbound lanes of Interstate 8, between Buckman Springs Road and the U.S. Border Patrol Checkpoint located on Interstate 8 near Pine Valley, California. While fleeing the wrong way on the highway, Mendoza rammed a California Highway Patrol car that was blocking his path. The Suburban was disabled during the collision; and it came to rest

near a highway guardrail. No one was injured in the collision. Mendoza and six others fled the scene. Five people, all illegal aliens, were taken into custody. Mendoza was not apprehended. A search of the Suburban produced 11 suitcases containing approximately 692 pounds of marijuana.

On August 24, 2005, Mendoza was arrested by United States Border Patrol agents in connection with the August 17 incident, after he was identified as the driver of another white Chevrolet Suburban (this time without drugs or aliens) at a temporary United States Border Patrol checkpoint located on eastbound Interstate 8 near Jacumba, California.

United States Attorney Lam stated, "Smugglers should know that they make things infinitely worse for themselves and others when they decide to run from law enforcement." Mendoza is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Sabraw on November 3, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.

DEFENDANT

Jovanni Mendoza

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Count One: Importation of Marijuana, 21 U.S.C. §§ 952 and 960.

Count Two: Possession of Marijuana with Intent to Distribute, 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1)

Counts Three, Five, Seven and Nine: Bringing in Aliens for Financial Gain, 8 U.S.C. § 1324 (a)(2)(B)(ii) and Aiding and Abetting, 18 U.S.C. § 2.

Counts Four, Six, Eight and Ten: Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II).

PENALTIES

Count One: Importation of Marijuana, 21 U.S.C. §§ 952 and 960 - Mandatory Minimum 5 to 40 years in custody followed by 4 years of supervised release and up to a \$2 million fine (count two).

Count Two: Possession of Marijuana with Intent to Distribute, 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1) - Mandatory Minimum 5 to 40 years in custody followed by 4 years of supervised release and up to a \$2 million fine (count two).

Counts Three and Five:

Bringing in Aliens for Financial Gain, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and Aiding and Abetting, 18, U.S.C. § 2. - Mandatory Minimum 3 to 10 years in custody followed by 3 years of supervised release and up to a \$250,000 fine.

Counts Seven and Nine:

Bringing in Aliens for Financial Gain, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and Aiding and Abetting, 18 U.S.C. § 2. - Mandatory Minimum 5 to 15 years in custody followed by 3 years of supervised release and up to a \$250,000 fine.

Counts Four, Six, Eight and Ten:

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II) - Up to 5 years custody followed by 3 years of supervised release and up to a \$250,000 fine

AGENCIES

United States Border Patrol
California Highway Patrol
United States Drug Enforcement Administration
Federal Bureau of Investigation